

# State Representative • 22nd District **Brendan Williams**



## 2009 Legislative Preview



### Contact Information:

132F Legislative Building  
PO Box 40600  
Olympia, WA 98504-0600  
360-786-7940

#### E-mail:

[williams.brendan@leg.wa.gov](mailto:williams.brendan@leg.wa.gov)

#### Toll-free Hotline:

800-562-6000

### Brendan's Committee Assignments:

- Audit Review & Oversight  
– *Vice Chair*
- Commerce & Labor
- General Government Appropriations
- Local Government & Housing
- Transportation

For an up-to-date list of all bills I worked on, please go to:

<http://www.leg.wa.gov/House/Williams/SponsoredBills.htm>

Dear Neighbor:

Responding to our national economy's severe decline, Governor Chris Gregoire proposed a balanced budget that would inflict severe cuts in order to "live within our means" and avoid tax increases. She's fulfilled her constitutional responsibility. But the conversation over the 105-day session will be whether the Legislature should give the people the opportunity to vote for additional revenue necessary to sustain programs they demand.

I believe the people should have that option. However, the governor is correct in noting that we could not entirely tax our way to a balanced budget. Considerable cuts appear inevitable.

It's ironic that Republicans here are blaming state government for a national economic crisis that arose under a Republican president and his no-regulation policies with respect to mortgage lending and our financial markets. The nation's economic collapse has even conservative states like Idaho – with a Republican governor and Legislature – scrambling to make huge cuts.

Lost in political rhetoric is the real pain that state budget cuts will inflict. Over the next two years, even assuming we get substantial federal assistance under President Barack Obama's leadership, the governor's budget proposal would, among other things:

- Cut the working poor safety net Basic Health Plan by 42%
- Deny pay increases to state employees, educational staff, and teachers – suspending Initiative 732 in the latter two cases
- Cut class-size reduction funds by 24%, partly-suspending Initiative 728
- Suspend the training requirements for long-term care workers just adopted by 72.53% of voters in Initiative 1029
- Close 13 state parks, locally including Tolmie and even the Capitol Visitor Center
- Cut four-year colleges and universities like Evergreen by 13%
- Completely eliminate Adult Day Health programs for 1,900 vulnerable adults, and inflict over \$100 million in cuts to other long-term care settings
- Let slip the popular goal of health care coverage for all kids by 2010
- Eliminate having a 2009 State Patrol cadet class (a real problem as troopers age and retire)

Quite apart from our duty to honor the hard work of public employees, I'm afraid denying them cost-of-living increases, at the same time layoffs and a hiring freeze create even more work for them, would greatly compound harms inflicted locally by the Bush Recession. If denied COLAs over the next two years, they will have gone without them for 6 out of 10 years — during a period in which they also sustained a drastic reduction in Plan 3 retirement benefits.

How much government are you willing to pay for? What is our moral responsibility as a just society? Those will be the questions I need to hear answers for during the long session. Any ideas are welcome.

Best,

Brendan

**Fighting for One Washington:  
Brendan and House Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee Chair Brian Blake on the Maier family farm outside Ritzville on a tour of Washington wheat country.**





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**W**e're amidst extremely challenging times. I'm still pursuing a number of policy bills, but I'm mindful of costs associated with any policy proposal. Our first priority must be to meet our existing obligations toward our most vulnerable citizens. Here are highlights of just three bills I've introduced:

**HB 1045:**  
**The Homeowners' Bill of Rights**

Those struggling to pay mortgages on new homes should not also pay twice for homebuilder negligence. Yet a homebuilders' lobby begging in Washington, D.C. for taxpayer billions – to mitigate a mortgage crisis its anti-regulatory lobbying helped create – has worked successfully in Olympia to deny consumer protections to the mortgage-paying taxpayers it wants to hit up.

House Bill 1045 would provide the same statutory warranty rights to those buying, or renovating, single-family homes as those buying condominiums have. In short, it would simply require homebuilders, not homebuyers, to fix their construction mistakes.

As I noted in a recent News Tribune column, "Remarkably, even traditionally Republican states like Indiana, Louisiana, Nevada, and Texas provide statutory warranty rights to homeowners. It's inexplicable that a state like Washington, with large Democratic legislative majorities, cannot be at least as progressive as Louisiana when it comes to protecting consumers."

Why should our state government fail to accord the same rights to those buying single-family homes as those wealthier citizens buying condominiums? In other words, why are military families in Lacey treated more poorly than rich downtown Seattle condo owners? Indeed, even those buying manufactured homes in our state have statutory warranty rights.

Many past editorials in The Olympian, Seattle Post-Intelligencer, and even the Republican Seattle Times have all strongly endorsed even more expansive versions of this bill, as has KOMO TV's consumer advocacy. We should bail out consumers and pass HB 1045.

**HB 1148:**  
**Further Protecting Domestic Violence Victims**

House Bill 1148 would allow domestic violence victims to include pets among those personal effects they can remove from an abuser.

As I write in the intent section for HB 1148, "The legislature finds that considerable research shows a strong correlation between animal abuse, child abuse, and domestic violence. The legislature intends that perpetrators of domestic violence not be allowed to further terrorize and manipulate their victims, or the children of their victims, by using the threat of violence toward pets."

Last year, after my similar bill passed the House 94-0, a woman from Shoreline testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee – with her dog in her arms – about how her husband set ablaze two pets of hers, and their house, in an effort to terrorize her. This year 26 of my House colleagues have co-sponsored my bill in the hope that the Senate will see fit to pass it.

**HB 1210:**  
**Fighting for Families Confronting Autism**

There has been a seeming epidemic in the increase in autism diagnoses among children. My own family has been confronted with this challenge. I believe that autism should be treated on a par with other physical ailments for purposes of health insurance coverage, and my House Bill 1210 reflects that belief. This would be similar to the groundbreaking mental health parity legislation I co-sponsored in 2005. Fifty of my House colleagues, both Democrat and Republican, identify with this need — they've all co-sponsored this bill that very dedicated autism advocates are working to educate legislators on. I fully expect that insurers that avoid paying claims will oppose this civil rights measure.



**W**hile much of the ambitious Action Agenda by the Puget Sound Partnership – to make progress on the essential task of cleaning up Puget Sound – cannot be pursued, a bright spot in dark budget times is ongoing work

in the 22nd District at the Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge to restore 762 acres in estuary lost to dikes. This landmark inter-jurisdictional effort, which will increase by 50% Puget Sound salt marsh, involves the federal, state, and Nisqually tribal governments — as well as Ducks Unlimited.